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STEVEN M. CUNNINGHAM

by Nathan C. Sweet

By his contemporaries, Steve Cunningham was known as a member of Stevenson's Regiment, New York Volunteers. An organization sent to California by sea from New York for garrison duty during the Mexican War, Stevenson's Regiment arrived in San Francisco during the winter of 1847, with replacements arriving later.

National Archives reveals that he enlisted in Col. Burnett's Regiment, New York Volunteers, April 21, 1848, as a private. He was appointed sergeant by Col. Burnett, April 23rd, and placed on recruiting service. His age is given as 27 years; birthplace, New York; occupation, clerk; joined at Brooklyn and stationed at Fort Hamilton. Later, the two regi-

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Cunningham's record card in the



Steven M. Cunningham Cabin in the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, located a few hundred feet north of the museum in the upper grove next to Ohio Tree. Photo by George Fisk from the collection of Rose Chapman and William Melvin.

STEVEN M. CUNNINGHAM

ments were consolidated as the First New York Volunteers.

In a letter to James Roane in 1887, (copy in the Yosemite Museum) Dr. Bunnell, author of Discovery of the Yosemite, mentions that Cunningham was at Horse Shoe Bend on the Merced River with Savage and Rose when Bunnell first crossed it in 1849. He was an election judge for the 1856 presidential election at Leach's Store on the Lower Crossing of the Fresno River according to Elliott's History of Fresno County. As Leach and Savage were partners until Savage's death, this may indicate a continuation of his earlier association with Savage mentioned above, perhaps as a regular employee.

The Mariposa Gazette of July 14, 1858, printed a notice of an application by Steve for a ferry license in Yosemite Valley at the intersection of the trail from Coulterville with the Merced River. The same issue reported that he was a delegate from Yosemite Valley to the Democratic party convention. It appears that he was in various promotions in and around Yosemite Valley until he joined the California Infantry in 1865.

After the war, he returned to mining and prospecting in Fresno County, dividing his time between Coarse Gold and Wawona areas. He wintered in a log cabin a short distance up Deadwood Creek from Hawkeye Mill. Here, the oldest Krohn children attended school, with Cunningham as teacher, before there was a Coarsegold public school. During the summer of 1872, he stayed at Coarse Gold to develop the Lady Ellen Mine in partnership with T. T. Strombeck. They were listed as co-owners of the Lady Ellen on the delinquent tax list of 1875. He was also a stockholder in the Texas Flat Mine, being on a list published 1878.

In the spring, with the help of a Mexican named Joaquin, he packed his donkeys and traveled to Wawona, home-

steading on the river where the campground is now. The area became known as Cunningham Flat and he received a patent on it in 1894.

For many years he acted as a volunteer custodian of the Upper Grove. According to Hutchins in Heart of the Sierras, published in 1886, the coaches stopped at his cabin, "Where those who have come to spend the day will probably take lunch. . . I can see his bright and genial look and can watch his wiry form and supple movements, while I write." He seems to have been an attentive host and popular companion for the visitors to the grove.

In 1898, his health failed and friends arranged his admittance to Sawtelle Soldier's Home in Los Angeles, where he died on July 3, 1899.

Those few still living who knew him around Wawona in their youth, remember him as a pleasant, friendly old gentleman.

* * * *

Information regarding Cunningham at Coarsegold came from Rose Chapman and William Melvin, with an assist from the Fresno Expositor. For more information about him, see Wawona's Yesterdays by Shirley Sargent.

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MADERA COUNTY ROAD RECORDS

by Doug Houston

(Continued from Number 3, Vol. III)

We now return to the mountains with a Notice of Intent to Petition, Oct. 4, 1870, for, "A public road commencing at McCullah's & Co. Saw Mill, thence. .up their Branch. . intersecting the main traveled road in Crane Valley. .by way of J. A. Cooper's Ranch to the Fresno Grove of Big Trees, near the Snetteker Big Trees. .where. .intersects a well-graded road $7\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Clark's old place on the main thorough-fare from Mariposa to Yosemite Valley & Falls."

Fifty-two signatures appear on a petition and Lewis' map shows the proposed road joining the road "To New Saw Mill" about three miles south of Bass Lake, with Robert Larramore's house close to the junction, then along the west side of the North Fork passing "McCullough Old Mill, Converse Old Mill, Rivers and a Barn." It terminates just above the head of present Bass Lake.

The petition is quite a literary accomplishment, of which the following are a few extracts: "All main traveled county roads west of the San Joaquin leading to the lumber section concentrated in Crane Valley, only five miles distant from an immense pinery containing nearly an inexhaustible supply of valuable timber, in the midst of which are the celebrated Big Trees. .that south of the Pinery alluded to good timber is becoming scarce and a further supply will soon become necessary for all settlers on the plains. .your petitioners pray that. .an order be made appointing viewers and surveyor to locate. .a road commencing. .about one mile north of Daniel Cathey's house. .by R. Laramore's place to Crane Valley. .from the head of Crane Valley to Fresno Big Trees, thence. .to what is known as the Mariposa

Grove of Big Trees."

A notation on the petition below the signatures says, "From the place of beginning to the foot of the Mountain above the upper end of Crane Valley and no further."

We still do not know the location of Daniel Cathey's house, nor the where or why of the "Snetteker Big Trees". The Clark's place alluded to was in all probability Galen Clark's Cabin at what is now Wawona.

Let's proceed some six years during which the railroad town of Borden and the California Lumber Co.'s (later Sugar Pine) flume has come into existence. Nov. 4, 1876, is from a road bond to accompany the petition of R. P. Mace. Mace's petition is missing, but the description from the bond states, "Commencing at or near a point known as the Al Dixon Grave on a public road from Fresno Flats to Buchanan Hollow. .thence down the flume of the California Lumber Co. to Jas. Van Winkel's, thence to Borden, Fresno County, California."

There are also petitions of John Ebul and J. T. Pemberton et al, dated respectively Feb. 5 and March 27, 1877, both starting near Dixon's Grave. Pemberton's list affected land owners; Ebul's cites, ". .that there is not at this time an unobstructed public road by which jurors, witnesses and other persons resident in the extensive Mountain Settlements between the Chowchilla and San Joaquin Rivers can reach the Railroad."

M. B. Lewis, S.H.T. Frakes and A. H. Hensley were appointed Viewers, Nov. 15, 1877. Lewis leaves us a map showing the proposed road starting at the town of Borden, continuing

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northeast to a point about a mile above the crossing of the Madera Canal and the present River Road (Road 400). This is about one and one-half miles northwesterly of and roughly parallel to the road from the Arcola Settlement to M. B. Lewis' that was "Declared a Public Highway", in 1870, and we wonder what happened to that. From there it roughly parallels the River Road at about a mile to the southeast, terminating at the Buchanan to Fresno Flats Road at a point about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles southeast of the junction of present Roads 400 and 415. Dixon's grave is indicated at this point.

There is a protest from H. S. Dixon, attorney for the Commerical Savings Bank of San Jose, that in a masterpiece of legal gobbledy-gook states that the whole proceeding is out of order and asks the board to reject same. He refers several times to the, "Pretended Survey, Report, Plant and Field Notes by the assumed Surveyor and Viewers." Lewis' field notes are missing, so it is hard to form an opinion as to pretended or not. There is no note of what action was taken by the Board. We wonder if Al Dixon's grave could be located at this date.

Next date is Jan. 8, 1883, for the petition of E. L. Crane et al, for a "Road to connect Fresno City with the Madera to Fresno Flats Road." Map and description show this as adjoining the Madera Fresno Flats Road in Section 29, T. 10 S., R. 20 E, at a point a little south of "Hildreth's Store," then southeast to the S.E. corner of Section 9 and following section lines south to a point about two miles south of the San Joaquin River. This route is parallel to and one-half mile west of present Highway 41.

Viewers appointed are C.D. Davis, C. H. Dustin and J. T. Pemberton; Davis is also Surveyor (M. B. Lewis

is no longer in evidence). It is interesting that Davis and Dustin report favorably on the proposed route, but Pemberton says it should be moved one-half mile east for a better crossing of the river. The petition was rejected June 5, 1883.

Pemberton seems to be vindicated by the petition of W. W. Davis et al, for a road along the route he favored and which was declared a public road Feb. 5, 1889. Hildreth's store was at the present Wide Awake Ranch, which by that time had passed from Jerry Brown to the Hildreths. The site is marked by an old basement hole still discernible near the road.

August 16, 1883, is for a petition over what is now Madera Avenue, from the railroad, south four and one-half miles to Cottonwood Creek. Description and map leave us no doubt as to location.

It is a great temptation for me to digress upon the old names that turn up with the petitions and, on this, there is one that is too much for my resistance: Man Wa Chan Chan, shortly after Borden sprang up, moved there from his old store on the Fresno River, erecting a large adobe building just north of the town and west of the railroad. He opened a general store and prospered sufficiently to import an expensive bride from China, complete with artificially small feet.

The old building stood until well within my memory, roof gone and walls slowly melting away. When the land was later prepared for a vineyard, walls were leveled and the building vanished completely. Chan's old store on the Fresno River, the adobe structure near the Savage Monument, is still standing. (See "Station Borden," Winchell's History)

Next is the road paralleling and adjoining the railroad from the Chowchilla River to Tulare County Line. It was declared a Public Highway

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June 11, 1884, as several witnesses testified that it had been in use for eight years and was passable without grading. This was the beginning of the end for the Landrum Road.

Feb. 4, 1885, dates the petition for a road, "Beginning at the north end of Jenny Lind Road, thence northerly to connect with the Fresno Flats to Panoche Road near Johnson's Ranch. This is necessary because the country is becoming "Densely populated" and needs, "Free access to County Seat and other places." Route cannot be determined definitely, but it appears to start at about the junction of Road 206 and Avenue 18 and end somewhere near old Kelshaw Corners. A note on the wrapper says, "Established May 4, 1887."

We next have not one but four petitions for the same road, the first dated Feb. 14, 1887, and the last June 9, same year. These are for a road, "Through the Adobe Ranch so that your petitioners as well as the traveling public can reach Bates Station, Quartz Mountain and Fresno Flats by the nearest and best way." From the viewers' report, "If adopted this route will be as it is now, used by the stages carrying mail between Madera and Fresno Flats and Hildrethville, and freight teams from Madera to Madera Flume and Trading Co's. sawmill."

Petition and field notes describe this as starting, "At a point in the Panoche to Fresno Flats Road where the present road crosses the Flume." They give start and terminus by section and township; route can be located with fair accuracy as starting close to the junction of the present Island Road and Road 400(River Road), thence up 400 to the junction of 406 and up 406 for about two miles. Note on the wrapper says, "No Highway", which may mean no action taken.

April 18, 1887, shows a Petition

of C. R. Ross et al, for a road from a point in the N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 27, T. 8 S., R. 22 E., to "Peckinpah's Mill." This receives no action, but on the petition of J. W. Dunlap et al, May 3, 1887, for the same road, viewers are appointed. On June 27 they file a lengthy report in which they state, among other things, that viewers should be appointed who could proceed with camp outfit and spend a week to ten days surveying best route; Indians should be employed to clear brush. They also stress need for this road because as "Associations of Grangers" have "corralled" the timber on Pine Ridge, "Plebeans" must have access to timber where "Grangers do not dwell."

A. Brown et al, May 10, 1888, file a petition for a road, "Beginning at a point on the Crane Valley road, at or near Carmen's. .to the settlement of Lima in the N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 4, T. 8 S., R. 23 E." Again surveyors and viewers are appointed who apparently were able to proceed as advised by their predecessors. Their field notes, dated day to day start May 5th and end June 30th. Their report includes the following: "Started at the South Fork. .to North Fork. .to Lumber Yard. .to Crane Valley Road. .Commencing again at South Fork and proceed toward Lima . .South Fork to Visser's. .Visser's to Sawmill." Note on wrapper says, "Established Sept. 15, 1888".

Peckinpah's Mill, still indicated on the Madera County Map, was located at Peckinpah Meadow at the top of High Ridge Northeast of South Fork. It later became the Pierce Mill and to my knowledge was operating in 1909. I spent that summer at North Fork and can well remember the double-freight wagons of lumber with eight to ten animal teams passing through on their two-to-three day trip to Fresno. From the mill to South Fork was a drop of some 3000 feet within

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five miles and a log or tree of somewhat less than timber size was usually dragged behind the wagons to assist the brakes. These were discarded just about South Fork and the sides of the road were well-covered with discarded drags.

This is the only reference where I have heard of the settlement "Lima". North and South Forks alluded to were the creeks, the settlements not being in existence then.

April 12, 1888, we have the petition of Thomas Desmond et al, for a road that is now our Avenue 18 from the railroad west to Road 16. This is needed because all land adjoining is planted to grain with no access to the railroad. Two of the viewers were Pablo Loynez and L. O. Sharp. I can remember Pablo Loynez as resident foreman for Miller & Lux at the old Bonita Ranch in the very early years of this century. The Bonita was only four miles from Houston's grain ranch and the families were quite neighborly. We note that Pablo signed with his mark. L. O. Sharp was my grandfather.

On Nov. 8, 1889, Thos. H. Leonard et al, petitioned the board to confer with Mariposa County Supervisors concerning a road between Mariposa and Raymond to be built by both counties. There is no record of action taken and, on June 30, 1890, Leonard again filed a petition; this time for a road from Raymond to Salt Springs, across the Chowchilla and proceeding along the west side of Stripped Rock Creek to the county line.

However, No. 1, 1891, S. H. Ashworth et al, file a petition for, "A public wagon road and a bridge across the Chowchilla River in or near the route now traveled by the Mail Carrier between Raymond and Ben Hur and Mariposa, said proposed road to extend from the Town of Raymond to the boundary line between Fresno and

Mariposa Counties." The petition goes on to state that there is no County Road leading from Raymond to Mariposa, that there is now a daily mail service between Raymond and Mariposa, "And the Mail carrier is compelled to carry mail over rough wood roads; that in the winter season the Chowchilla is a dangerous and at times unfordable stream."

There is a viewer's report filed Dec. 9, 1891, signed W. W. Ashworth and E. H. Foster, in which they report, "That there are two routes strenuously urged by the respective inhabitants of said towns. .those of Raymond urging. .the eastern, herein designated as the Martin Road, those of Mariposa. .the western, herein designated as the Oakdale Road." They discuss both routes from standpoint of construction and need for about one and one-half pages and finally recommend the Oakdale Road, but allow that both are needed. They end by composing a fable to illustrate their predicament: "'But this,' you say, 'does not answer our purpose, 'We only have money to construct one of the proposed roads, so which one will be of greatest present benefit to Fresno County?' You put us in the place of the family man with only flour going to the store without credit and only cash for one article: Which shall he take home, Meat, Vegetable or Fruit?"

No record remains indicating action taken. A note on the wrapper says, "No Highway"; we are uncertain as to whether this means no action or is a comment after traveling the road.

Next road proceeding to take place under Fresno County jurisdiction is the petition of John Bertram et al, dated Feb. 4, 1893, for, "A wagon road to be viewed, surveyed and laid out," over a route which as they describe would closely approximate the present Road 200 (O'Neals to

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North Fork) from just above little
Gold Creek to its junction with
at the present County Maintenance Yard. They go on to state, "The necessity for said road is to avoid steep and dangerous grades on what is known as the Arnold Hill."

Viewers' report recommends a road be constructed, "With passing places of sufficient length and width to allow eight animal teams with two wagons to pass comfortably, such passing places so placed as to prevent any chance of a blockade when due care is used on the part of the drivers." They go on to state, "The present road. .is a steep and dangerous road, rocky and in a very bad condition. ." This is signed by J. H. Bethel and B. T. Ellis, viewers, and George L. Hoxie, surveyor and viewer.

Arnold Hill derived its name from Jim Arnold and Ben Arnold ranches over which the road passed and, while name is now almost forgotten, the hill still occupies the same position; except for some straightening, the road closely follows the route as laid out in the nineties. However, it is a far cry from the present black-topped way on which two cars can pass comfortably, to the narrow, deeply-rutted strip of foot-deep dust in the summer or deep and dangerous washes in winter, and with passing places none too plentiful, up which heavy freight wagons labored or braked cautiously downward, and on which, a little later in the present century, the Model T Fords snorted and boiled. Remembering this, one wonders what the "steep and dangerous road" of the petitioners and viewers was like.

A note on the wrapper says, Established Jan. 6, 1894", which brings the final action and construction under Madera County jurisdiction, the county having attained official existence March 11, 1893.

While it is not the intent of this chronicle to go beyond the inception date of Madera County, one further item seems to call for inclusion. This is the many miles of roads created by acreage subdivisions.

In the late eighties and early nineties, the Lankership Colony adjoining Madera on the south and east and the John Brown and Howard and Wilson Colonies south and west of the town, divided many sections of land into ten and twenty acre lots and created north-south and east-west roads every one-half mile, by the simple expedient of designating them on the recorded subdivision maps. These maps bore no certificates of dedication or acceptance of roads, a lack that in later years led to considerable controversy, as some of these designated roads were not constructed or needed until many years later. Then the question arose - were these still public rights of way or had they reverted to the adjoining property?

In the period from 1912 to 1916, the Dairyland Farms and Fairmead Colonies were formed, covering an area of thousands of acres, roughly bounded southerly by a line approximately two miles north of the Fresno, on the north by the Chowchilla, on the east by the Southern Pacific Railroad and the west by the Chowchilla Canal. These were similar to the earlier colonies in road and lot design, but the maps bore full certificates of dedication of roads by the subdividers and acceptance by the Board of Supervisors, making them permanent public rights of way unless formally abandoned by the county.

In 1912 the towns of Chowchilla and Fairmead came into existence, with formally recorded maps showing full layouts of streets, alleys and parks, complete with certificates of dedication and acceptance by subdividers and Board of Supervisors.

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